

The Alphawave 'First Five Years' Story

A shortened version of this story appears on the cover insert of the FirstFiveYears CD ©2001 Binary Records. It also appears on the www.alphawave.co.uk website.

Alphawave was an idea born out of the long term desire I had to make music that wasn't dominated by voice - nor limited by traditional song structures of verse/chorus etc. Not to say that there is anything wrong with a good tune. Tunes are of great interest and desire to me - they open up the whole experience of emotion within music.

I have always resented the space taken up by voice in popular music forms, even though a singer myself. I have always had a yearning to hear the sounds and not the 'folk story' vocal line. Voice of course can be just another sound element but in many cases I found the space taken by the vocal - and the background value of the instrumentation - really annoying.

Even on many current and recent recordings - David Gray for example - A track starts with an interesting sound idea or riff and then annoyingly it falls into the background or becomes just plain chording behind his laid back vocal style - on each track!

I had realised many years ago that I wanted to try making music that I would want to listen to myself. I had been in Bands in the late 1970's (yup!) and early 80's until I really wanted to go it alone. Amongst my early songwriting were tracks that had little or no voice. It fascinated me that a sound or noise could convey so much - tell so much of a story - without any vocal embellishment. Early Matt Johnson and his 'The The' project was an influence, until he became obsessed with the USA. As the Gang of Four had been in the late 70's with Gill's 'noise' guitar style.

In the mid 80's I was caught up in my Pop Music phase and had a Deal with Chappell Music and RCA records.

Though I had some deals with various bands and labels it wasn't until the 1988 advent of House in the UK that I really woke up again and found some new energies.

In the early and mid 90's dance music was evolving in all sorts of interesting directions and large numbers of people were indulging in the phenomenon of Ambient or Chill music especially as a prelude or 'recovery' from a nights' mayhem. This was the area I wanted to explore.

I felt Ambient music had many similarities with Classical orchestral music and also had a filmic potential and suggested all sorts of fascinating soundscapes. I had heard some Brian Eno music some years before

I still believe this. Apart from the theory that more is more, I feel there is room for all types of music now. Ambient music should be fairly unbounded. It has the power to inspire and fundamentally alter mood and perspective. It can take the listener on journeys impossible in other

music forms, with or without chemical stimuli. Ambient and Electronica by their nature attempt to define a minimalist approach but one which gives full value and space to texture and the sensual nature of harmonic sound!

Anyway, enough general background - this is the story of Alphawave and my own brand of Glambient Ambient music. This is the first five years of Alphawave - and though smart folks out there might realise that 1995 - 2000 is actually six years - this has evidence of the best Glambient Alphawave activity from the start of the project to the end of the year 2000. The tracks on the CD are ordered in the way I think they sound best rather than chronologically. The story goes...

1995 - Ne Plus Ultra Studios set up in East London, starting in earnest to put together lots of new sounds. Many tracks were produced in this period including a number of Trance tracks. Much time was spent refining the Alphawave sound and approach. Alphawave track of '95-Uncivilisation

1996 - Alphawave gaining interest now, resulting in a small independent Northampton record label signing for a single and album deal. Uncivilisation was to be released as a single in time to ride the chill Drum & Bass vibe at the time. The album was put together during the year and scheduled for release in early '97. Among work undertaken was some soundtrack pitches and Trance/acid tracks. Alphawave track of '96 - Solar Substance Sea

1997 - 'Solar Substances' CD - named after the very weird, dark and lovely tune - 'Solar Substance Sea' (which Future Music called "A Forbidden Planet Soundtrack for the 90's") was completed. Sadly, as with lots of tiny record labels, The Northampton label had more enthusiasm than cash and the whole project fell through. I responded by setting up my own tiny label - 'binary records' - and went for distribution in late '97. At this time I was getting to grips with the Internet and put up an Alphawave website, planning to sell the 'Solar Substances' CD online. A website was born along with a huge and long lasting diversion of energy into 'WWW' matters.

Although Solar Substances was well received by some it didn't achieve any real breakthrough success in its target audience and so wasn't widely heard. In '97 it was hard to get distribution for music that wasn't heavily promoted and distributors were finding it hard going with established acts as well. Track of '97 - Splenderousness.

1998 - At this time I was also working on a video project for the track Solar Substance Sea. This tune lent itself to lots of ambient cinematic weirdness and spooky stuff. So a collaboration was formed with fine arts and After Effects Guru - Colin Buttimer. The footage for the video was shot with cameraman Geoff Cole and included lots of the early Alphawave motif of big 1950's electricity pylons. The video was finished in time to be shown at the Lux Cinema exhibition of

multimedia artists in march '98. Shown later at the Changing Rooms Gallery in Walthamstow in June 2001 and on MTV (see next column). Alphawave track of '98 - Decorous

1999 - started with the fruits of a collaboration with long term music head Jon 'Boom' Martin and work was completed on the single 'Watching the Cloudz'. This is the Ravetrancechill track with the solid trumpet tune which was pushed for release but had trouble achieving lift-off! The project was to be released under the name 'Alphawave Goes Boom'. Other 1999 projects included some music theme pitches for TV. Track of '99 - 'Watching the Cloudz'.

2000 - A mostly fallow year for Alphawave musically - complicated by moving house and putting the studio into store. Later on in the year saw lots of promotion on the Alphawave music catalogue to online music sites like MP3.com (look under alpha-wave) and the compilation of this 'FirstFiveYears' collection of Alphawave greats!

...and what of The future?

2001 sees the launch of this CD and the set-up of the Ne Plus Ultra Studio in the new location. This together with a new influx of recording methods and technologies promises to be very exciting time for Alphawave. The rehabilitation of acoustic guitar into some of the future work is likely.

Also more collaborations with other artists will have a hopefully expansive effect on the Alphawave creative processes. Watch out for the 'Mechanical Angels' in 2002 as they may well appear as an Alphawave track and theme with other new recorded work!

MTV started showing the Solar Substance Sea video in Sept 2001 on Friday night's Chilloutzone.

I still have the same core mission ideals in 2001 as I had in 1995 - I believe in the potential of Ambient music and still want to move into Soundtrack work a la BladeRunner/Vangelis and experiment with progressive themes. I still have Glambient ambitions for the Alphawave project -

There is more to come - Stay sticky!

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